Cice Rivera

Touro University

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International Surveys

When conducting surveys in different cultural settings, researchers must consider how culture influences the way participants understand and respond to questions. For example, cultural beliefs and norms can affect how individuals interpret questions about addiction and recovery (Harzing & Reiche, 2023). In my topic of addiction recovery and behavioral patterns, cultural differences can influence how individuals report stress, coping strategies, and substance use behaviors. For example, in some cultures, discussing mental health or addiction can carry stigma, which can lead participants to underreport symptoms or avoid answering certain questions (Harzing & Reiche, 2023). To make a survey culturally appropriate in another country, the language must be adapted to make sure it's clear, respectful, and culturally sensitive. For example, terms such as "substance use disorder" or "recovery" can be reworded depending on cultural norms and levels of mental health awareness (Harzing & Reiche, 2023). Also avoiding slang or phrases that might not translate well in different cultures, as this can create instrument bias and reduce validity (Maricopa College, n.d.).

Another important step would be conducting a pilot test in the target culture. For example, asking local participants to review survey questions and provide feedback to determine if any items feel uncomfortable, confusing, or inappropriate. This helps ensure that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure without cultural bias (Harzing & Reiche, 2023). It's also important to consider adjusting response scales to match cultural expectations. For example, some cultures may avoid extreme responses, which can affect Likert scale results and create misleading data patterns (Harzing & Reiche, 2023). According to Harzing and Reiche (2023),

response styles can differ across countries and should be considered when analyzing international survey data. Overall, making surveys culturally appropriate requires translation accuracy, sensitivity to stigma, and pilot testing in the target population. These steps help ensure that data collected in different countries is valid, respectful, and comparable. For example, cultural awareness strengthens the reliability of international survey research by reducing misunderstandings and improving data accuracy (Harzing & Reiche, 2023).

References

Harzing, A., & Reiche, B. S. (2023). Key issues in international survey research. https://harzing.com/publications/white-papers/key-issues-in-international-survey-research

Maricopa College. (n.d.). Instrument bias. https://open.maricopa.edu/culturepsychology/chapter/instrument-bias/